

NEW ENGLAND PASTOR

"One interest will prevail . . . Christ our righteousness."

November/December 2009



ATTRACTED OR OBLIGATED?

WHAT'S YOUR MOTIVATION FOR BEING A CHRISTIAN?

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New England Pastor is a bi-monthly magazine for pastors in New England, carrying forth the vision that Ellen White had for the area over a century ago: "I saw that when the message shall increase greatly in power, then the providence of God will open and prepare the way in the East for much more to be accomplished than can be at the present time" (Testimonies for the Church, vol. 1, p. 149,). It is free of charge to those who pastor in New England. For all those living outside of New England who would like to subscribe, please call or email us.



One Interest . . . by Shawn Brace

A

bout four years ago,

I was pushing a lawnmower at Andrews University. While attending the seminary, I worked for the grounds department and spent many hours during the week doing this activity—and others like it. It provided a nice reprieve from the heavy studies, and I spent much of my time behind the lawnmower—or raking leaves—pondering the various subjects I was learning about in my classes. I wrote many papers while pushing that machine (and the grass probably suffered as a result).

But one of the ideas that popped into my head while pushing that lawnmower was starting a magazine. I had kind of been lamenting the marathon that is the publishing process (it can take a year or two to get an article published in many publications), and my patience was wearing thin. So I said to myself, “Why not start your own magazine?” I immediately called my dad and he thought the idea was great.

And we knew exactly what the theme of the magazine would be. There is only one theme. The apostle Paul put it this way in his first epistle to the Corinthians: “For I determined to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ, and Him crucified” (1 Corinthians 2:2, NASB). Echoing this sentiment, Ellen White wrote in 1890, “One interest will prevail, one subject will swallow up every other,—Christ our righteousness.”¹

It’s really that simple.

And so, for the past two years, my dad and I—both pastors in New England—have tried our best, by God’s grace, to uplift that message of “Christ our righteousness.” We have relied upon other writers who share the same burden—Richard and Jo Ann Davidson, Herbert Douglass, John McVay, to name a few—to

fill the pages of this bi-monthly magazine. And we have sent it free of charge to all Seventh-day Adventist pastors living in New England. Our hope has simply been to encourage them in this message of Christ’s righteousness as they labor in the hardest field in the United States.²

So how did *you* get this magazine? You’re not a New England pastor! Well, there are others who have caught this same vision and they have felt burdened about giving every pastor the opportunity to be encouraged in this message. So in this special issue, we have sent the magazine out to every pastor in North America.

But fear not: this is the *only* time you will receive this magazine if that’s your desire. We will not bother you ever again. You, no doubt, already receive a magazine or two that is more of a nuisance than a blessing. And we don’t want to add to that list.

Of course, maybe you will be blessed by this issue. Maybe as you flip through the pages something will catch your eye and your heart will be strangely warmed. Or perhaps there’s something that will make you think a little bit and you can ponder it as *you* push your lawnmower around. If so, we would be happy—no, ecstatic—to continue to send the magazine to you, free of charge. (If you absolutely hate receiving something like this for free, we wouldn’t turn away a \$10 donation!)

So if you would like to receive future issues of the magazine, there are a few ways you can let us know. The easiest way would be for you to send us your name and address via e-mail. That can be sent to newenglandpastor@gmail.com. Or, you can send the same information via snail mail to New England Pastor: 8 Village Green, West Lebanon, NH 03784. And if all else fails, you can always send us the

information by way of carrier pigeon—or whatever works for you! Just let us know.

The bottom line is that we have a burden to encourage you in this wonderful message that has been bestowed upon the Seventh-day Adventist Church. My dad and I—and we believe all those who write for us—are of the firm conviction that we, as Adventists, have not only been blessed with an understanding of the Sabbath, or the state of the dead, or whatever other peculiar doctrine we may have. We have also been blessed with a wonderful and richer understanding of the Cross and Christ’s righteousness.

So grant us the privilege of sharing that understanding with you!

- 1 Ellen G. White, *The Ellen G. White 1888 Materials* (Washington, D.C.: Ellen G. White Estate, 1987), 765.
- 2 According to *Gallup*, Vermont, New Hampshire, Maine, and Massachusetts are the least religious states, respectively, in America. The other two New England states—Connecticut and Rhode Island—are also in the “top” ten. See Frank Newport, “State of the States: Importance of Religion,” *Gallup*, 28 Jan 2009. Available online at <http://www.gallup.com/poll/114022/State-States-Importance-Religion.aspx> (accessed 12 Nov 2009).

Shawn Brace pastors four congregations in New Hampshire and Vermont. He and his wife, Camille, live in West Lebanon, New Hampshire, and they recently welcomed their first child, Camden Shawn, into the world. He also published his first book, *Waiting at the Altar*, in 2008. When he isn’t busy with pastoring, he loves spending time outdoors—especially photographing the beauty of New England.



Isaiah 53, Substitution, and the Covenant Curses—Part 1

by Richard M. Davidson

No other chapter in the Old Testament presents such a comprehensive and beautiful picture

of the Gospel as Isaiah 53. Here we find the most central, the deepest, the loftiest Messianic portrait that the Old Testament prophets, outstripping themselves, ever achieved. The fourth Messianic Servant Song of Isaiah (Isa 52:13–53:12) stands in the background of almost every New Testament treatment of the passion, resurrection, and exaltation of Christ.¹

At the heart of Isaiah 53 is the theme of penal substitution—that the Messianic Servant paid the legal penalty of our transgressions to make atonement for us in order that we might escape punishment. All of the major elements of the biblical doctrine of substitutionary atonement are found in this chapter: (1) the Servant was sinless and righteous (vv. 7, 9, 11); (2) He bore the punishment of others' iniquity (vv. 4–6, 8, 11–12); (3) He suffered and died for “all,” an unlimited atonement (v. 6; cf. 52:12); (4) God (the Father) Himself acted to lay our sins upon the Servant and to punish Him for those sins (vv. 6, 10); (5) the Servant suffered willingly and deliberately (vv. 4, 12); (6) He became a “guilt offering” (Hebrew *’asham*) to make atonement for our guilt (v. 10; cf. Lev 5–7); and (7) the suffering/death of the Servant benefits us for whom He suffered and died, bringing us peace (*shalom*) and healing and justification (vv. 5, 11).²

One evidence for the substitutionary atonement in Isaiah 53 that has not received much attention is the connection of this prophecy with earlier portions of the Old Testament. In this brief study, I wish to call attention to the inter-textual linkages of Isaiah 53 with the covenant curses summarized in Deuteronomy 28, and intimated even earlier in Genesis 15.

Deuteronomy 28 summarizes the blessings that would attend Israel as they

remained in covenant loyalty to God, and likewise announces the covenant curses that would come to God's people if they turned away from their covenant loyalty to the Lord, their God. Among the covenant curses is the mention of “sickness” (Heb. *choli*) in vv. 59, 61. A synonymous Hebrew word for “sickness” or “faintness,” *madveh*, is also employed in the covenant curses of Deuteronomy 28 (v. 60). Another word delineating the covenant curses in Deuteronomy 28 is the noun *makkah*, which can be translated as “plague, wound, blow” (v. 59 [3 times], 61). The verbal form of this word, *nakah*, “to strike,” is found four times in the covenant curses of Deuteronomy 28 (vv. 22, 27, 28, 35), depicting the Lord “striking” rebellious

wounds [*makkah*]; they have not been closed or bound up, or soothed with ointment.”

Key words in this passage link decisively with the covenant curses of Deuteronomy 28. The same Hebrew noun *makkah* is used to describe the “wounds/afflictions” as four times in Deuteronomy 28, and the same verbal root upon which this noun is built, *nakah* “to strike,” is used in Isaiah 1 as occurs four times in Deuteronomy 28. The same Hebrew word *choli* is employed by Isaiah to describe Israel's “sickness” as found in Deut 28:59, 61. Finally, the Hebrew adjective *davvay*, “sick, faint,” corresponds to the noun *madveh* “sickness” of Deut 28:60; both words come from the same Hebrew root. By means of these inter-textual linkages, it is clear that God is communicating to Israel in Isaiah's day that they are already beginning to suffer the covenant curses for their covenant disloyalty to Him.

But this is not the end of the story! In Isa 1:18–19 there is already the hint of God's promise to forgive and cleanse Israel's sin. What is only hinted at in the opening chapter of Isaiah is given amazing amplification in Isaiah 53, as the Suffering Servant voluntarily takes upon Himself the covenant curses of the people of Israel! The Messianic Servant in this chapter is described as a “Man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief [*choli*, singular]” (v. 3), the One who “has borne our griefs [*choli*, plural] and carried our sorrows” (v. 4). The verbal parallel does not show up in many English translations, but the Hebrew word often translated “grief/s” in these verses is *choli*, the same word translated “sickness” in Deut 28:59, 61 and Isa 1:5. The Messiah is taking upon Himself the curse of “sickness/grief” that His people deserved! Isa 53:4b–5 continues the description of His vicarious suffering: “Yet we esteemed Him stricken, smitten [from the verbal root *nakah*] by God, and afflicted. But He was wounded for our transgressions, bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement

The Messiah is taking upon Himself the curse of “sickness/grief” that His people deserved!

Israel with various curses.

In light of this background in Deuteronomy 28, note the condition of Israel that is described by Isaiah in the opening chapter of his prophetic book. Within the context of a covenant lawsuit (or legal investigative judgment), signaled by the call to the witnesses (heaven and earth, v. 1), God indicts Israel for rebellion against Himself (v. 2), for failure to “know” (i.e. continue in intimate covenant relationship with) Him (v. 3), for forsaking the Lord and turning away backward from Him (v. 4). What is the result of this breach of covenant loyalty? The covenant curses have already begun to be manifested! Vv. 5–6: “Why should you be stricken [*nakah*] again? You will revolt more and more. The whole head is sick [*choli*], and the whole heart faints [*davvay*]. From the sole of the foot even to the head, there is no soundness in it, but bruises [*chaburah*] and sores and putrefying

Continued on page 7



Attracted or Obligated?

by Robert Hunsaker

Hypothetically speaking, if there were no eternal life or heaven to gain, would we still be Christians? Think about it! If there were no heaven and eternal life to look forward to and no eternal destruction to be avoided, would we still be engaged in putting our time, energy, money, resources, etc, into Christianity?

Suppose all the benefits of the Christian temporal life were intact. There were still God and Jesus, and there were still the earthly aspects of Christianity in place, such as a relationship with the Lord, but there was no eternity to be gained or lost, would we still “do religion”? You just have your 70-80 years, and then off into eternal oblivion, would we still “do Christianity”?

Do we follow and worship God merely because of the desire we have for eternal life, *or*, from the deepest recesses of our heart and soul, do we love and enjoy being in God’s presence? Do we enjoy an actual friendship with God? Do we *like* Him?

Or, do we primarily follow Jesus to get what we really want—eternal life? Is religion to us a wise eternal investment strategy, similar to a 401K? Is our motivation akin to the bumper sticker that reads—“Eternity: Smoking or Non-smoking?”

Notice in Psalm 27:4 what’s in David’s heart. What is his motivation for worshiping God, for “doing religion”? It’s totally beautiful. “One *thing* I have desired of the LORD, That will I seek: That I may dwell in the house of the LORD All the days of my life, To behold the beauty of the LORD, And to inquire in His temple.”

Notice the key issue driving David to “do religion.” He actually thought God was beautiful. David’s concern wasn’t God’s divine physical attractiveness, but his beauty of character and personality. David saw a gorgeousness of personhood,

of nature. He wanted to know God. He wanted to see God’s beauty of character on a deeper and deeper level, and because of that, David wanted to spend time with Him.

One of my favorite books in the whole Bible is the book of Philemon. The book of Philemon tells of Paul’s dealing with his personal friend Philemon, regarding a runaway slave Onesimus. In this book, we are actually seeing a picture of how God relates to us. The gentle and persuasive appeals that Paul uses towards Philemon, and the call to higher motivations, all are revelations of God’s way of relating to us.

Somehow, Onesimus, who had run away from his master Philemon in Colossae, had come into contact with Paul and with Christianity, and had been converted to faith in Jesus Christ. He had

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When we do that, our behavior may be right, but our heart is still wanting and desiring what is wrong.

subsequently become a close friend and minister to Paul, who was also a friend of Onesimus former master/owner Philemon. You can imagine what a delicate position this puts everybody in, including Paul.

In Paul’s time, it was the law that runaway slaves were usually punished with death by crucifixion, or occasionally they were thrown into a pool of lampreys, a carnivorous fish that ate them alive. Since the thought of Onesimus returning

to Philemon was a major concern for Paul and Onesimus, Paul writes this letter to his convert and friend Philemon on behalf of his new friend and new convert Onesimus, a runaway slave.

Imagine how you might write a letter in this circumstance. Would you command Philemon to free Onesimus by the authority of your position in the church? Would you try to make Philemon feel guilty for having slaves in the first place? How would you approach this fellow Christian brother to both obtain forgiveness for Onesimus, and not lose your influence and relationship with Philemon?

Notice how Paul approaches Philemon:

I always thank God when I pray for you, Philemon, because I keep hearing of your trust in the Lord Jesus and your love for all of God’s people. You are generous because of your faith. And I am praying that you will really put your generosity to work, for in so doing you will come to an understanding of all the good things we can do for Christ. I myself have gained much joy and comfort from your love, my brother, because your kindness has so often refreshed the hearts of God’s people.

That is why I am boldly asking a favor of you. *I could demand it* in the name of Christ because it is the right thing for you to do, ⁹but because of our love, *I prefer just to ask you*. So take this as a request from your friend Paul, an old man, now in prison for the sake of Christ Jesus. . . .

My *plea* is that you show kindness to Onesimus (Philemon 1:4-10, emphasis added).

Paul is saying that as an authority in the church, and as the one who brought Philemon the good news of salvation and thereby became Philemon’s spiritual father, that he could demand or obligate or require obedience to his command. But Paul, operating on God’s principles, says that I

choose rather to *appeal* to you for *love's* sake.

Paul is saying, "I don't want you to do what I'm asking because you have to, or you feel obligated out of a guilty conscience, but rather I'd prefer that you do what is right because of your love for God and your love for me, your brother in Christ, and because of your love for your new brother in Christ—your former slave—Onesimus."

This is so vital and so significant for us as Christians (or anybody for that matter) to understand. God doesn't want us to do the right thing merely out of a sense of obligation or requirement. When we do that, our behavior may be right, but our heart is still wanting and desiring what is wrong. While our behavior is right, our heart and mind are still self-serving.

Ultimately, God is not after merely our right behavior or performance, but after our hearts and minds. If we are doing what's right because we have to, but not because we want to, we're defining hypocrisy. God still loves us and pursues us, but what a better and happier life we would have if we did what is right because we love others, and we love God, and because we recognize that it is the right way to live.

Notice how Ellen White puts it:

The man who attempts to keep the commandments of God from *a sense of obligation merely*—because he is required to do so—will never enter into the joy of obedience. *He does not obey*. When the requirements of God are accounted a burden because they cut across human inclination, we may know that *the life is not a Christian life. True obedience is the outworking of a principle within*. It springs from the *love* of righteousness, the *love* of the law of God. The essence of all righteousness is loyalty to our Redeemer. This will lead us to *do right because it is right . . .*¹

Two points in regards to this quote and

in regards to Philemon:

One, obedience motivated by mere obligation or requirement is not really obedience. While it is better to do the right thing even if it's for the wrong reason, we'll never really appreciate or enjoy obedience. We'll never really enjoy being a Christian, and we'll never really enjoy following God. We'll always be grudgingly following God, and dragging our spiritual feet on the inside.

Why is this true? Because while we're obeying on the outside, we'll be secretly wishing we could disobey on the inside. Take marriage for example. Would your spouse be happy if she knew that while

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you had always been faithful to her in your behavior and actions, you had really always secretly desired to be unfaithful to her, but you hadn't because of fear of getting caught, divorced, public shame, etc.? Your spouse would be devastated that you had never been faithful to her in heart, but only in behavior. We all want to be loved, and whether it's unfaithfulness in behavior or unfaithfulness in heart, both leave people feeling empty and unloved.

It's the same with God. If we are a Christian only because we fear bad consequences or want a reward, we don't

truly love God and the principles of His kingdom.

Second point: the best motivation is to do what is right because we agree that it is right. To do right because we see that doing the right thing is the best for ourselves, for others, for society, for everyone. The world just works better when everyone "obeys" the "law" of self-giving love.

Doing what's right actually makes sense. God didn't just pick some arbitrary rules for us to follow to test us before letting us into heaven. True obedience is the source of happiness for us as well as for others. The principles of self-sacrificing love, which are the foundation of all true obedience and Christianity, are woven into the very fabric of social, emotional, and psychological reality.

Verse 14 of Philemon is the crux of Paul's approach to Philemon. Notice how two different versions translate the passage: "But I didn't want to do anything without your consent. And I didn't want you to help because you were *forced* to do it but because you *wanted* to" (NLT, emphasis added). "But without your consent I wanted to do nothing, that your good deed might not be by *compulsion*, as it were, but *voluntary*" (NKJV, emphasis added).

Over and over again in scripture, we're told to do things not as an obligation, or ritual, or as a burden, but because we are Christians in heart and mind. For example, in the Old Testament God told the Hebrews repeatedly that their sacrifices were worthless, because they didn't reflect a deep heart experience and repentance, but were rather a mere form, a "going through the motions," while their hearts were far from God. It's the same with obligatory, self-motivated obedience. As Isaiah 26:13 says, "And so the Lord says, 'These people say they are mine. They honor me with their lips, but their hearts are far away. And their worship of me amounts to nothing more than human laws learned by rote.'" (The Greek Septuagint version reads: "Their worship is a farce.")

God does not desire that we do

what He says because we have to, “or else.” Rather, God wants us to enter into loving intimacy, friendship, and communion with Him. That’s a completely different experience, a completely different relationship, and a completely different religion. It is the difference between the old covenant and the new covenant. The old covenant is bondage (i.e. obedience is a mere obligation), while the new covenant is joyous obedience (i.e. doing what’s right because it is right, and because we love God and others)

David repeatedly talks about the joy of obedience, and that is exactly what Paul is pointing to in the book of Philemon. It all depends on your picture of God. If you picture God as watching us closely with a desire to reprimand or punish as soon as a mistake is made, then you’ll rebel, or obey from fear and obligation—even if you don’t want that for your motivation. You will be held—psychologically and motivationally—by your picture of what God is like in your mind. If you picture God as He is revealed in Jesus Christ, then you’ll obey from love and desire to do right—naturally.

As the the biblical authors say:

“Blessed [is] the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful. But his *delight* [is] in the *law* of the LORD; and in his law doth he meditate day and night” (Ps1:1-2). “I *delight* to do Your will, O my God; Your Law is within my heart” (Ps 40:8). “Let thy tender mercies come unto me, that I may live: for thy law [is] my *delight*” (Ps119:77). “For I *delight* in the law of God after the inward man” (Rom7:22). Pure and right motives aren’t just a New Testament belief; they’re throughout scripture.

Again, Ellen White notes:

It is not the fear of punishment, or the hope of everlasting reward, that leads the disciples of Christ to follow Him. They behold the Saviour’s matchless love, revealed throughout His pilgrimage on earth, from the manger of Bethlehem to Calvary’s cross, and the sight of Him attracts, it softens and subdues the soul. Love awakens in the heart of the beholders. They hear His voice, and they follow Him.²

Notice, it isn’t fear of punishment, or hope of reward, that motivates true

Christianity. It is meant to be love for God, awakened by seeing His love and goodness for us as manifested in the life and death of Jesus Christ, that changes the heart and empowers us to follow Him.

It is a necessary and sobering question that we all need to ask ourselves. If there were no heaven to gain, no heavenly reward and eternal life, and if there were no hell (however you understand it) to be shunned and feared, *would you still be a Christian?*

If all we had was 60-90 years of life, with no eternity future, would we still be Christians and living in fellowship with God? The answer to that question tells us whom we love more—God or self. Jesus proved at Calvary that God loves us more than He loves Himself. When push came to shove, and God’s life was on the line, would He give up His life for us or save His life and lose us? He chose to sacrifice Himself to save us at any cost to Himself.

- 1 Ellen G. White, *Christ’s Object Lessons* (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald, 1941), 97. Emphasis added.
- 2 Idem., *The Desire of Ages* (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press, 1940), 480.

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Isaiah 53, continued from page 4

for our peace was upon Him, and with His stripes [*chaburah*, plural *chaburoth*] we are healed.” Again the “smiting/striking” (*nakah*) by God harks back to the fourfold divine “smiting” of rebellious Israel listed in the covenant curses of Deuteronomy 28. But here the Messianic Servant, the New Israel, receives the covenant curses of divine smiting in Israel’s stead. Isa 53:5 also mentions the “stripes” (*chaburoth*) received by the Messiah, and these “stripes” are among the covenant curses mentioned in Isa 1:6.

(The Servant’s Commission); and 50:4–11 (The Servant’s Commitment). There are seven formal New Testament citations of the Isaiah’s Fourth Messianic Servant Song (Isa 52:13–53:12, The Servant’s Career): Matt 8:16–17 (citing 53:4); Luke 22:37 (citing 53:12); John 12:38 and Rom 10:16 (citing 53:1); Acts 8:32–33 (citing 53:7–8); Romans 15:20–21 (citing 52:15); and 1 Pet 2:22–25 (citing 53:5, 9). The New Testament contains about 35 additional allusions to this Servant Song.

- 2 For deeper study of the aspects of substitutionary atonement in this Servant Song, see especially: KyeSang Ha, “Cultic Allusions in the Suffering Servant Poem (Isaiah 52:13–53:12),” Ph.D. dissertation, Andrews University, 2009; Steve Jeffery, Michael Ovey, and Andrew Sach, *Pierced for Our Transgressions: Rediscovering the Glory of Penal Substitution* (Wheaton, Ill.: Crossway, 2007); F. Duane Lindsey, *The Servant Songs: A Study in Isaiah* (Chicago: Moody, 1985); J. Alec Motyer,

The Prophecy of Isaiah: An Introduction and Commentary (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 1993), 442–443; and Edward J. Young, *The Book of Isaiah*, 3 vols.; New International Commentary on the Old Testament (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1972), 3:334–359.

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1 The first three Messianic Servant Songs of Isaiah are: Isa 42:1–9 (The Servant’s Call); 49:1–13



Our pastor is preaching a series on the Holy Spirit. At the end of a recent sermon, she asked us to pray in groups for an outpouring of the Spirit, and this has resulted in the Spirit's working in many of our lives. It is the Holy Spirit that brings "all other blessings in its train."¹

Years ago I was travelling to my sister's to spend the weekend, and I decided to take a couple of books along in case I got bored. One was called *How Come It's Taking Me So Long to Get Better?*, and the other one was just a book about the Holy Spirit. I couldn't finish the first one, so I started the one about the Holy Spirit, and as soon as I did, I realized why it was taking me so long to get better. I had been reading the wrong book! Nothing can replace the work of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit makes effectual all of the promises of God, and it brings all other blessings in its train. Without it, life would be joyless and dark. I think the devil knows this, and that's why he doesn't want sermons preached that encourage people to pray for the Holy Spirit.

That night, after we heard the sermon our current pastor preached and had prayed for one another because of it, our son was at a friend's house. One of the kids, who happened to be the pastor's daughter, was waiting for her mom to pick her up when they heard some sirens. Kidding, my son said that the sirens might be for her mom. Well, they were! She had fallen asleep and driven off the road and totaled her car, but thank God she was unharmed.

Another time recently the wife of our local Bible worker was involved in an accident just after she had dropped off a friend whom she and her husband had been ministering to in their home. She was unharmed but recognized that her soul-winning activities were not pleasing to the devil. You see, "the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness,

goodness, faith, meekness, temperance" (Galatians 5:22, KJV). I am sure the devil does not want any of these fruits to be exhibited in our lives, especially when they are exhibited in conjunction with the message that prepares people for the second coming of Jesus. If the work in our churches is unavailing of fruit, then we need our pastors to encourage us to pray for the Holy Spirit.

I heard a pastor complain that the seminary didn't train him to be a leader, only a chaplain. Someone in the group said that women whose kids were grown were great prospects for leadership positions in the church. If this is what they want to do, let them do it, and be not dismayed if you feel unequipped with leadership

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skills, because what we really need in the church is not more leaders but more witnesses, people who can (and do) share the motivational message that will create a desire in our hearts to do whatever God asks us to do. Then we will be ready

to "fall in" wherever the Holy Spirit impresses us to work for God. But God is not in the business of telling us what to do if He knows we are not willing (or even willing to be made willing) to do it. Maybe some would go through the motions of "serving" in carefully selected capacities, but we weary of our dead works and deeply desire to serve the living God (see Hebrews 9:14).

We are not lacking things to do that would draw attention to the Gospel. We are very creative people. What we are lacking is the pure and effective motivation of heart with which to do them. And that doesn't come as standard equipment with the human package. We need the Holy Spirit.

Dear Pastor, we need you to be filled with the Spirit, so that you can recommend and encourage this experience to us. Do not lament your incapableness as a leader. We are ok with your being a chaplain. But make sure that you are a chaplain that has "the matchless charms" of Jesus Christ.²

1 See Ellen G. White, *Fundamentals of Christian Education*. (Nashville, Tenn.: Southern Publishing Association, 1923), 434, etc.

2 See Idem., *Review and Herald*, June 3, 1890, paragraph 6, etc.

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The Gospel Commission for Adventist Teachers

by Garry Sudds



Think about this: Each school year our Father calls Seventh-day Adventist teachers to conduct

a 180 day evangelistic series. That is *the most important thing* on His “do list” for Adventist schools.

For many years most seasoned Adventist educators have understood the positive influence they have had on the lives of their students. How they cherish those moments when former students contact them and take time to thank them for the positive impact they have had on their lives. And oh how that revives in each teacher the desire to “go the extra mile” and give sacrificially of their time and energy for this new batch of students God has placed in their care.

Understanding that teachers are Christ’s “ambassadors,” they pray earnestly for the Holy Spirit to fill them and use them as they do the work of evangelism through building strong, positive relationships with their students. But is “relationship evangelism” enough? Have they done all that God wants by using their influence to draw others to Him?

For the answer to that question let’s look at what our Father has to say. Here are His expectations for Adventist teachers:

- “God’s messengers are commissioned to take up the very work that Christ did while on this earth. They are to give themselves to every line of ministry that He carried on. With earnestness and sincerity *they are to tell men [and students] of the unsearchable riches and the immortal treasure of heaven*” (9T, 130).¹
- “Everyone who has received the

gospel has been given sacred truth to impart to the world. God’s faithful people have always been aggressive missionaries, consecrating their resources to the honor of His name, and wisely using their talents in His service” (AA, 109).

- “Your voice, your influence, your time—all these are gifts from God and are to be used in winning souls to Christ” (9T, 38).

Are academics important in Adventist schools? Yes, they are; but only when the children understand that God has a special purposee are his for their lives.

- “Every follower of Jesus has a work to do as a missionary for Christ, in the family, in the neighborhood, in the town or city where he/she lives. All who are consecrated to God are channels of light. *God makes them instruments of righteousness to communicate to others the light of truth*” (2T, 632).
- “Our confession of His faithfulness is Heaven’s chosen agency for revealing Christ to the world” (DA, 347).
- “The two restored demoniacs were the first missionaries whom Christ sent to preach the gospel in the region of Decapolis. . . . They could tell what they knew;

what they themselves has seen and heard and felt of the power of Christ. This is what everyone can do whose heart has been touched by the grace of God” (DA, 340).

- “Go to work . . . the humblest effort of unselfish love will be crowned with His blessings, and receive its greatest reward. Do what you can, and God will increase your ability” (R&H, Mar. 13, 1888).
- “We are Christ’s witnesses, and we are not to allow worldly interests and plans to absorb our time and attention” (9T, 53,54).
- “It is our work to reveal to men/women [and students] the gospel of their salvation. Every enterprise in which we engage should be a means to an end” (MH, 148).
- “It is the privilege of every Christian, not only to look for, but to hasten the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ” (COL, 69).

It is a well known fact among Adventist pastors that the work of public evangelism happens best when a sincere Christian member who has a relationship with a non-Adventist person brings them to the evangelistic meetings. Applying that principal to Adventist education it would follow that teachers who have formed loving relationships with their students are the one’s our Father can use most effectively in sharing what God has done for them and inviting each student to accept Christ as their Lord and Savior.

That has been the first objective of Adventist education since its earliest inception. But the work of the Adventist educator must go even further. They must form lasting relationships with their

students, invite them to accept Jesus as their personal Savior and then they are to train their student to, “Go therefore and make disciples of all people.”

Look at what our Father says about the children and youth who will play a vital role in finishing His work of redemption on earth:

- “We have an army of youth today who can do much *if they are properly directed and encouraged.* We want our children to believe the truth. We want them to be blessed of God. We want them to act a part in well-organized plans for helping other youth. *Let all be so trained that they may rightly represent the truth, giving the reason of the hope that is within them, and honoring God in any branch of the work where they are qualified to labor. . . .*” (CET, 205).
- “The future of society will be determined by the youth of today. Satan is making earnest, persevering efforts to corrupt the mind and debase the character of every youth; and shall we who have more experience stand as mere spectators, and see him accomplish his purpose without hindrance? Let us stand at our post as minutemen, to work for these youth, and through the help of God to hold them back from the pit of destruction. . . . Satan is gathering an army of youth under his banner; and he exults, for through them he carries on his warfare against God” (CT, 47).

- “Let every Christian educator give such workers sympathy and co-operation. *Let him encourage and assist the youth under his care in gaining a preparation to join the ranks*” (Ed, 270).
- “There is no line of work in which it is possible for the youth to receive greater benefit. All who engage in ministry are God’s helping hand. They are co-workers with the angels; rather, *they are the human agencies through whom the angels accomplish their mission. Angels speak through their voices, and work by their hands.* And the human workers, co-operating with heavenly agencies, have the benefit of their education and experience. As a means of education, what “university course” can equal this?” (Ed, 271).
- “Every youth, every child, has a work to do for the honor of God and the uplifting of humanity” (Ed, 58).
- “When heavenly intelligences see that men are no longer permitted to present the truth, *the Spirit of God will come upon the children, and they will do a work in the proclamation of the truth which the older workers cannot do, because their way will be hedged up. . . . Our church schools are ordained by God to prepare the children for this great work*” (6T, 203).

From the quotations listed above, it is crystal clear why our Father has called Adventist educators to teach for

Him in Adventist schools. Are academics important in Adventist schools? Yes, they are; but only when the children understand that God has a special purpose for their lives. When that is understood, they will strive for the highest grades they are capable of achieving in order that they can give to God the “first fruits” of their lives. The work of the Adventist educator is a sacred and holy calling from our Father. He has placed in the care of each teacher the work of bringing all students to a deeper relationship with Jesus; and training them to play their appointed role in that “army of youth *rightly trained.*” “You will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be My witnesses” (Acts 1:8).

¹ All quotations are taken from Ellen G. White. Emphasis added unless otherwise indicated.

Garry Sudds is the director of education for the Lake Union Conference. He has a bachelor’s degree from Atlantic Union College and a masters of science in Education from Iona College. He is in the process of completing a doctoral degree in Educational Leadership from Andrews University. During his career in Adventist education, Garry has been an assistant boys’ dean, principal, chaplain/ Bible teacher, associate superintendent, and superintendent of schools in the New Jersey and Rocky Mountain conferences. He served for 13 years as the secondary associate in the Lake Union and for the past two years as director. He has been married to his wife Joanna for 40 years, and feels that he has been blessed abundantly because, “My wife loves me, my children respect me, and our little Yorkie goes crazy every time I walk in the door.” The only legacy he hopes to be remembered for is: “This man was a very close friend of Jesus.”

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The Latter Rain is the Message of Christ and His Righteousness—Part 1

by Jerry Finneman



Many times books of the Bible are studied solely to isolate experiences of being “in the Spirit.”

This kind of isolation study is also true in bringing out “new light,” especially concerning indications on future events to discover details which can be slipped into our eschatological charts.

In most cases, however, neither the experiences of “in the Spirit” nor the proclamation of “new light” lines up with biblical teachings of the Spirit and of fulfilled prophecy.

That there is a still-future dimension to many Old Testament writings cannot be denied. In some prophetic books, there are sections specifically devoted to pictures of the future.

The book of Joel is one that people turn to in hopes of figuring out prophetic signs and wonders coupled with infillings “of the Spirit” that hopefully can verify their religious experience.

Let’s consider the historical setting of Joel’s book. His people had known many superficial revivals before his lifetime. This prophet of God communicated a clear message of truth to His people. Joel pointed out that superficial religion can never satisfy God. Their superficiality called judgments upon themselves.

Likewise today. Any revival that substitutes emotionalism with repeated calls followed by repeated failures, instead of Gospel preaching of sin, judgment, and righteousness (by faith) under the Holy Spirit’s unction is no pattern for God’s people (John 16:8-11). Not in our day. Not in Joel’s day. Joel’s message was simply one of judgment, with a call to both corporate and individual heart-felt repentance, along with the promise of restoration both of land to pristine beauty and of the people to God (Joel 1:12-17).

The experience of God’s people in the time of Joel was as dry as the parched desert without dew or rain. But the prophet

promised a true revival, reformation, and restoration illustrated by the autumn and springtime rains. The land would produce again.

Three elements in verses 20b-21b are repeated in verses 21-24. The repeated elements are promises following the declaration that “the LORD has done great things” (v. 21). He says, “be not afraid” (v. 22) and “be glad” and “rejoice” (v. 23).

The first promise is directed to the animals, which had been affected adversely by the judgment of locust invasion and accompanying drought (1:20). The effects of that judgment would be completely reversed. “The open pastures” (1:19) would again produce grass and vegetation. Trees and vines would also yield their fruit (cf. 1:7, 12, 19).

The second promise (2:23) was directed to the people who were earlier instructed to grieve over the destruction wrought by the locusts (1:5, 8, 11, 13). They could now “rejoice” because God promised to restore fertility to their fields through the autumn and spring rains as assured in Deut 11:14.

This was followed by the third promise (2:24) of a successful and abundant harvest because of the former and latter rains.

Those historical rains typified the promises of God in the outpouring and saturation of the Holy Spirit in the beginning and ending of the preaching of the gospel of the righteousness of Christ.

The application of the agricultural early rain and latter rain are messages of righteousness by faith. Both the autumn and spring rains are “according to righteousness” (Joel 2:23, literal translation).

Consider just a sampling of agricultural language as applied to God’s doctrine of righteousness. “Let My teaching drop as the rain, My speech distill as the dew, as raindrops on the tender herb, and as showers on the grass” (Duet 32:2).

Again, “Rain down, you heavens, from above, and let the skies pour down

righteousness; let the earth open, let them bring forth salvation, and let righteousness spring up together” (Isa 45:8).

And again, “For as the earth brings forth its bud, as the garden causes the things sown in it to spring forth, so the Lord will cause righteousness and praise to spring forth before all the nations” (Isa 61:11).

And yet again, “Let us know, let us pursue the knowledge of the Lord. His goings forth is established as the morning; He will come to us like the rain, like the latter and former rain to the earth.”

The Latter Rain/Loud Cry is a Teacher of Righteousness

Joel 2:23 translated literally reads: “He (God) has given for you, the autumn rain according to righteousness,^{1, 2} and He will pour down for you rain, a teacher of righteousness,³ and spring rain [as] in the first [or former/autumn rain].”

The KJV (margin) translates the first or former “rain” coming “according to righteousness” and the latter rain as “a teacher of righteousness.” Both seasons of rain are associated with righteousness.

There are elements in seer Joel’s prophecy that refer to events that lie in the end time. God’s promise of the pouring out of His Spirit was partially fulfilled and illustrated on the Day of Pentecost, fifty days after the crucifixion of Christ.

Following the quotation from Joel 2:28-32, regarding the descent of the Holy Spirit from heaven (see Acts 2:14-21), Peter preached the truth about Christ and Him crucified (Acts 2:22-23). If anyone claims that he has prayed down an experience called the “latter rain” or even the “former rain” and does not uplift the Crucified Christ and His righteousness as first, and last, and best and foremost, we should be wary.

We have the work of the Holy Spirit outlined by Jesus Himself. He spoke about the Person and the work of the Holy Spirit that would come after Christ returned to heaven. Jesus called the Holy Spirit “the Spirit of truth” who convicts

of righteousness as well as of sin and judgment (John 14:27; 16:10).

Jesus promised that the Holy Spirit would bring to His disciples the “remembrance of all things” that Jesus previously said to them (14:26). He said further and explicitly that the Holy Spirit would “glorify Me, for He will take of what is Mine and declare it to you” (John 16:14). The work of the Holy Spirit is not to call attention to Himself, but rather to Jesus and to the truth as it is in Jesus. There are some who speak of Jesus until they get into a kind of a spiritual orbit in heavenly places. But they are not in heavenly places. Theirs is a very earthly place, even down on their hands and knees barking and rolling around like a dog one minute and shouting something unintelligible the next. Sometimes the shouting is understandable, but...

There is no evidence that Jesus nor the Holy Spirit shouted at the devils as some people do today. Jesus, under the power of the Spirit, rebuked devils and commanded them to go out from those whom they possessed. Neither did Jesus argue with the devil over the corpse of Moses. Jesus said simply, “The Lord rebuke you!” (Jude 9).

Later, while on earth as “the Son of Man,” especially in the Wilderness Temptation in desperate conflict with Satan, Jesus as “the Last Adam,” quoted Scripture revealing that man (Adam) lives by faith—that is, by every word proceeding from the mouth of God (Matt 4:4). Jesus did not shout. He relied on the Scriptures alone.

There are people today who have ministries, so-called, in which they hunt down people and supposedly cast out demons from them. Jesus never went hunting devils. They came to Him. He did not have a devil ministry. The devils hated Him and tried to destroy Him, but instead they trembled in His presence and fled from Him. They are the ones who shouted and screamed. But not Jesus. Nor did any of His disciples.

There were in fact demon-possessed persons who didn’t realize that fact. They were religious leaders who shouted and who crucified Jesus, thinking they were doing God a service! But they hated Jesus

and His teachings, especially the teaching of salvation in Him alone. They, like the unholy devil spirits, screamed and shouted “Crucify Him!”

But never did the Holy Spirit engage in such activity. He, like Jesus, is a perfect gentleman. And the shouting at devils was not present in the outpouring of the Holy Spirit in the “early rain.” And it was not so in the beginning of the “latter rain.” Nor with it be when the “latter rain” comes around again.

Both the former rain and the latter rain are about the outpouring of God’s Holy Spirit containing the righteousness, the character of Christ, upon His people at the beginning of the preaching of the gospel in Christianity, and likewise in the preaching of the “everlasting gospel” at the time of the end just before Christ comes for His own (Acts 2:16-21). (We might add that in between these two mighty outpourings of God’s Spirit, He was with His people of the Book, the Bible, throughout the history of Christianity).

The message of Peter in Acts 3:19 follows Joel’s message of repentance and restoration of favor to God. Here Peter called the outpouring of the Spirit “the times of refreshing from the presence of the Lord” (Acts 3:19-21).

Ellen White joins “the latter rain” with the “refreshing” and includes “the loud cry of the third angel.” She so wrote in 1858: “It is the latter rain, the refreshing from the presence of the Lord, the loud cry of the third angel” that causes God’s people to become fearless in regard to the influence of evil angels and persecution by relatives.⁴

One year later she wrote that nearly all Sabbath-keeping Adventists “believed that this message [to the Laodiceans] would end in the loud cry of the third angel.”⁵ But it didn’t end that way. Many were looking for a quick fix. When the work was not accomplished in a “short time, many lost the effect of the message.”⁶

Later Mrs. White was concerned about a dry desert experience⁷ among God’s people (such as described by Joel). Instead of heading for Heavenly Canaan they reversed direction moving toward Egypt in reform⁸ and the centralizing of

the publishing work in Battle Creek.⁹

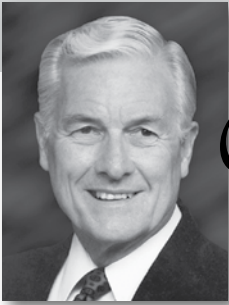
Another time she asked rhetorically, “Shall we turn away in rebellion and unbelief, and propose to go back to Egypt?” Immediately she exclaimed emphatically, “Never! Our march should be onward, toward the heavenly Canaan. Every step should be from faith to a greater faith, from obedience to a more perfect obedience, from light to a brighter light; for ‘the path of the just is as the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day.’”¹⁰

- 1 “Moderately” or “faithfully” is literally “according to righteousness.”
- 2 The phrase translated “former rain” in 2:23 is translated in the NIV as “the autumn rains in righteousness.”
- 3 The KJV, margin, translates “rain” (môreh) as “teacher.” Elihu, in rebuking Job, asked him concerning God, “who is a teacher like him?” (Job 36:22, ESV)
- 4 Ellen G. White, *Early Writings of Ellen G. White* (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald, 1945), 27.
- 5 Idem., *Testimonies for the Church* (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press, 1948), 186.
- 6 Ibid.
- 7 Looking back from the perspective of February 6, 1890 in a sermon entitled “Who Will Accept the Light from Heaven?” the prophet stated rather pointedly to a group of ministers: “We have been at work on the law until we get as dry as the hills of Gilboa, without dew or rain. Let us trust in the merits of Jesus Christ of Nazareth” (Ms 10, 1890, *1888 Materials*, 560).
- 8 About ten years earlier some who were classed as God’s people began “to turn toward the world, as the hearts of the Israelites were constantly turning back to Egypt. In conversation, in dress, in deportment, this class manifest a conformity to the world” (*Signs of the Times*, October 21, 1880). Four years later, in 1884, regarding health reform, her concern was “We have been going back to Egypt rather than on to Canaan” Letter 3, 1884, *Counsels on Diets and Foods*, 408).
- 9 On another occasion, writing from Fresno, Calif., and burdened about the working of some who were attempting to centralize the publishing work in Battle Creek, Mrs. White wrote, “To make such propositions as these is more like going back to Egypt than on to Canaan” *Plans for Our Publishing Work* (no date, but probably during the 1890s), 54.
- 10 White, *Signs of the Times*, January 6, 1888.

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Musings on How Well Adventists Have Kept Their Promises When They Chose Their Name, 150 Years Ago

by Herbert E. Douglass



October 1860, one hundred fifty years ago next year, the United States of America, then only 84 years old, had a population of a little more than 31 million, twice its 1840 level. New York had 800,000, Boston, 177,000, and Washington, D.C. about 61,000.

The first pony express sped from St. Joseph, Mo., to Sacramento, Calif., in 10 days. Young, twenty-year-old entrepreneur, John Rockefeller, to become the richest man ever in world history, investigated the discovery of oil in Titusville, Pa., and declared that petroleum had little future. Hundreds of newspapers crowded the young nation's streets but were too costly for the average person.

One year before, in 1859, little Battle Creek, Michigan, was incorporated as a town.

Reality Check

Who would have known then that Battle Creek, in the next fifty years, would be home for the largest printing plant in Michigan (Review and Herald Publishing Association), and the world famous Battle Creek Sanitarium, the Mecca for the rich and famous as well as the healing place for everyone else, would to also be known to this day as the Cereal Capital of the World?

What is going on here? Adventists from the east had come to town (1853) and Battle Creek and the world has never been the same! Hard to believe then and now! After all, not more than 3500 Adventists existed anywhere and were largely limited to the Northeast with some small developments in the upper Midwest.

But something with world significance happened in Battle Creek on October 1, 1860—a modern church movement was born—and they called it the “Seventh-day Adventist Church.” Not easy to come by! Most of its leaders were against a formal name, declaring such would put them back

into the Babylon they had just come out of.

However, bare facts stared them in the face! For example, Adventists could not legally own property, such as a publishing house, without a legal name. Visiting preachers could not be identified as legitimate, trusted, representatives of the general body without some credentials, properly authorized.

Finally, after much discussion over several suggestions, the motion was made to name their movement, “Seventh-day Adventist.” It clicked! Ellen White, now 33, reported, “No name which we can take will be appropriate but that which accords with our profession and expresses our faith and marks us a peculiar people. The name Seventh-day Adventist is a standing rebuke to the Protestant world.”¹

What were the assets of this new movement? Not much, except for their human resources of “traveling brethren” with fire in their bones, such as Joseph Bates, James White, J. N. Andrews, John Loughborough, and Stephen Haskell, and the other half of the White team, Ellen, whose wisdom based on her revelations galvanized those who recognized her insights. Holding them together was their weekly periodical, the “Advent Review and Sabbath Herald,” the one unifying glue that held the young movement together, mostly via the United States Postal Service.

By 1860, this new movement had a developing theological message that far transcended anything else on the horizon. For religious historians, that fact continues to be amazing, especially when that message is studied and understood—a biblical-based perspective that united the chief theological questions that had been studied for centuries. What were those interacting, interrelated biblical truths now brought together in one message?

Reality Check

- A credible defense against fast-rising Darwin evolution.
- The perpetuity of the seventh-day

Sabbath and its end-time significance.

- A clear biblical play-book on how this world would end.
- A simple whole life program in contrast to the goofiness in mid-19th century medicine.
- A wide-ranging, inclusive philosophy of health that would be a leader in preventive medicine.
- A clear statement on the conditional immortality of man combined with the pre-Advent judgment.
- An unambiguous understanding of New Testament teaching on “righteousness by faith.”
- The end-time significant of the sanctuary doctrine especially focused on what Jesus is now doing in the Heavenly Sanctuary.
- The end-time significance of Revelation 13 and 14.

To sum up, for the first time, a Christian movement formulated an overview of the Big Picture, called the Great Controversy Theme. The Theme brings together into an organized pattern of God's involvement with man's sin and how He plans for man to overcome sin. Every aspect of this Great Controversy Theme unfolds why Jesus came to earth, why He died, and why He now lives as man's Advocate and Personal Savior from sin.

Nothing is more central in God's plan than His own personal entrance into the human family assuming all of our human infirmities and inherited weaknesses, facing Satan head-to-head, toe-to-toe, on Satan's home court, and proving Satan wrong on all accounts. He then died a death that no pen can adequately describe. Why? So that sinner's don't have to die the death they deserve. He surely paid the price of Justice, proving God has been right since the beginning of the Controversy against the lies of the Master Liar. The Theme clarifies how God has put into our hands our responsibility to work with Him in removing sin from our lives. Simply put and simple to understand!

Reality Check

But 150 years ago is history. How does this Adventist movement today measure up to its promise so clearly declared in 1860?

- By a huge margin, the Adventist membership outside of North America and Europe is faster growing and with far greater in numbers: this fact alone adds cultural pressure to stay united on certain doctrines, primarily because (a) many of the indigenous leaders have not had sufficient theological training and (b) many of the writings of E. G. White are not yet translated into their languages.
- The delay in the Advent issue has divided Adventists into four groups: (a) those who value Ellen White's unambiguous and oft-repeated statements; (b) those who discount these explicit White statements; (c) those who sensationalize world events, forgetting the stated causes of the delay; and (d) those who put more emphasis on "occupy till I come," and not focusing on the causes for the delay.
- A growing focus on "social justice" and environmental concerns, all good in themselves, but detracting from the major purpose and mission of the Adventist Church.
- A remarkable de-emphasis in ministerial training—as observed by Bull and Lockhart's *Seeking a Sanctuary*² since the 1960s—on the role of sanctification in the doctrine of righteousness by faith that has led to a fading interest in why Jesus has not returned.
- A growing emphasis, especially in the United States, for more balance in the denominational structure between institutional and congregational management, which, possibly, could contribute to more doctrinal divisiveness and reduced mission support.
- The women ordination's issue remains troublesome, contributing to a lack of unity on other matters.

- The reluctance to see the lasting damage of certain issues that appeared to be "settled" in the publishing of *Questions on Doctrine* in 1957.
- A surprising vocal minority that question the creation-week of seven days and the establishment of the seventh-day Sabbath to "remember" the Genesis account of creation.
- The reluctance to see the New Testament simplicity of the dual emphasis on justification and sanctification as composing the essence of "righteousness by faith," thus, differentiating this position from the typical, prevailing, Evangelical position.
- The astonishing rise of the "emerging church" principles with monikers such as "spiritual formation," "contemplative prayer," and "finding God in the silence," all the while declaring that this "appealing" freshness is a deeper way to find a closer relationship with God.
- A continuing tension in many churches, large and small, regarding liturgy and music that departs from scriptural principles.

All that being noted, the majority of Seventh-day Adventists today remain so because of their whole-hearted commitment to the two cardinal doctrines proclaimed in their name—the seventh-day Sabbath as emphasized in the fourth commandment and the visible, near, return of their Master, the Lord Jesus Christ. No one, in whatever language the name is translated, needs to wonder who these Adventists are!

Reality Check

- Most still today look fondly for the resurrection day when Jesus awakens their loved ones, never again to part.
- Most still today raise their prayers to their Lord Jesus who is finishing His work of "cleansing the sanctuary" of sins forgiven and forsaken, both in the heavenly records and in their lives

today.

- Most still look at biblical history as a straight line, from Eden to Eden restored, not as some kind of philosophic circle, where all lives go on living after death, in some kind of immortality.
- Most still believe that the seventh-day Sabbath is God's holy day, not man's holiday.
- Most still believe that our present form of church government is the best way to emphasize unity in a world church, in doctrine and sense of mission.
- Most still believe that an often hidden clout is rising in spirited young people whose first concern is what truly identifies a Seventh-day Adventist in a fragmented world—even in a fragmented world church.³
- Most still believe that recovering (a) the Adventist footprint of one hundred sixty years ago, (b) the fervent respect that old and young had for each other, (c) the wholesome and humble esteem that they had for the integrity and self-authenticating authority of the messenger of the Lord in their midst—that footprint will help fulfill all that God waits for as He draws the curtain down on this world's history and opens another vista of the world to come.

1 Ellen G. White, *Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 1 (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press, 1948), 223.

2 See Malcolm Bull and Keith Lockhart, *Seeking a Sanctuary: Seventh-day Adventism and the American Dream*, 2nd ed. (Bloomington, Ind.: Indiana University Press, 2007).

3 William Johnson, *The Fragmenting of Adventism* (Nampa, ID, Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1995).

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Weighing In By Bill Brace

As most of you are aware, a Seventh-day Adventist institution of higher learning is the center of an internal denominational controversy whose magnitude is probably without precedence in my lifetime. I wish it were not so, but it seems the battle is by no means restricted to the one educational campus. Indeed, the proponents of a view contrary to the stated fundamental belief held by our Church body are far and wide. Maybe, more than we realize.

It is a rough day for our beloved church. Hopefully, when the dust settles, we will come out from the battlefield as a better soldier and a more attractive bride. And, may we learn, by God's grace, much more about what we should believe and, dare I say it, much more about ourselves as it relates to our characters.

There are some among us who lament such a battle has taken place. I am not one. If there is a problem, it is best to confront the issue in love and be certain that we are giving the "trumpet a certain sound." This juncture of earth's history is no time for pluralism; the world and God both beg for a definite message to be articulated. And, make no mistake, the Lord's honor is at stake.

I am not a scientist, nor the son of a scientist. Does that disqualify me from possessing and verbalizing an opinion? Perhaps so in the minds of some. If the issue were only one of science, I would concur. However, the issue is not of science alone. To think such is shallow. The much larger issue involves the very gospel itself.

Let me explain. Many years ago I excitedly began to perceive the deep significance and pervasive ramifications of Christ's statement in John 5:39: "You search the scriptures, because you think that in them you have eternal life; and it is they that bear witness to me" (RSV).

As I began to apply that to my belief system, I came to the realization that the life and death of Jesus, the gospel, was the formula, the great measuring stick, for the accurate interpretations of every scriptural doctrine. Ellen White wrote in *The Great Controversy*, "The mystery of the cross explains all other mysteries."¹ In addition, and even more clearly, she wrote, "The sacrifice of Christ as an atonement for sin is the great truth around which all other truths cluster. *In order to be rightly understood and appreciated, every truth in the Word of God, from Genesis to Revelation, must be studied in the light which streams from the cross of Calvary, and in connection with the wondrous,*

I came to the realization that the life and death of Jesus, the gospel, was the formula, the great measuring stick, for the accurate interpretations of every scriptural doctrine.

central truth of the Saviour's atonement."² Please note the power and clarity of that last sentence as it relates to the present issue over creationism.

So how do we apply the message of the cross, the heart and basis of the gospel, to the current issue? The apostle Paul wrote, "If any *man* be in Christ, *he* is a new [creation]: old *things* are past away; behold all *things* are become new" (2 Corinthians 5:17 KJV). The new birth is instantaneous. Paul's word and the words of Jesus to the proud Pharisee, Nicodemus, set the basis for our interpretation of Psalm 33:6, 9 and the Genesis account of creation. The work of the cross and the work of this world's creation are

consistent with one another. It has to be so or God would be working at cross-purposes in the revelation of Himself. Thus, the creation of this world was instantaneous, not over long eons of time.

The mistake in this issue began when the gospel and science were separated and divorced in the various classrooms. Thus, one has his isotope and the other has his half-life alone. Yes, those instruments have their place in the issue. However, the battle, if allowed to continue on that level, will go on *ad nauseam*—not unlike those who get into doctrinal battles with members of other faith systems, each one with his/her "proof texts." The forgotten ultimate arbiter is the cross of Calvary. Again, the bottom line and what is really of issue is how the debated topic either adds to, or subtracts from, the gospel and the character of God.

In conclusion, this current creationism issue serves as a graphic reminder to us pastors that our articulation of the gospel should be an accurate one. Could this battle be one example of a bitter harvest through our failure to do so? May it be a "wake-up call" for all of us, including me.

1 Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy* (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press, 1950), 652.

2 Idem., *The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, vol. 5 (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Publishing, 1970), 1137. Emphasis supplied.

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